

DECISION RECORD

RATTLESNAKE FOREST HEALTH PROJECT

E.A. #OR-035-98-06

The planning and environmental analysis for this project were joint efforts between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Forest Service (USFS). As stated on page 1 of the BLM environmental assessment (EA), each agency is responsible for issuing the appropriate decision document. This decision record applies to the BLM portion of the project.

Decision

I have determined that none of the alternatives analyzed in the Rattlesnake Forest Health Project EA OR-035-98-06 constitutes a major Federal action effecting the quality of the human environment. On the basis of the information and analysis contained in the EA, and public comments received, my decision is to select Alternative 2, the proposed action, as described in the EA circulated to the public for comment.

The following specific actions shall be implemented in the proposed action.

- 1) A timber sale will be offered to commercially thin approximately 194 acres of forest stands. The commercially thinned areas will be underburned following thinning.
- 2) Precommercial thin approximately 158 acres of forest stands. Precommercially thinned areas will be underburned following thinning.
- 3) Reduce juniper tree stocking on approximately 126 acres. Treated areas may be underburned following treatment.
- 4) Protect and enhance riparian values within 59 acres of riparian areas. Activities will include: placing large woody debris in stream channels, fell conifer and hardwood trees, planting hardwoods and/or sedges, and fencing sensitive areas.
- 5) Of the new road construction, the portion on BLM-managed land would be closed, but not obliterated. The road on National Forest System land would remain open (EA, page 19). Approximately 1.2 miles of existing roads would be closed following timber harvesting. Including the closed new construction portion for this project, total road closures would be approximately 1.6 miles. New road open to the public would be approximately 0.24 miles.

Decision Rationale

A no-action alternative (Alternative A) and one action alternative (Alternative B) that improves the health of forest stands were analyzed in the EA. Alternative 2 was selected because it improves the health of forest and woodland stands, protects and improves conditions, while protecting wildlife habitat. Alternative A was not selected because it does not meet the purpose and need for the area.

There are no known threatened and endangered species in the area based on present information. They may be modified to avoid impacts.

During the comment period, three letters were received regarding the proposal. One letter asked for clarification and reconsideration on several topics: roads; NEPA documentation; forest, soil, and watershed protection; species; water quality issues; and fire. A letter was received from an individual regarding the botanical survey process. A letter was received from an adjacent landowner regarding bark beetles, grazing restrictions, and closing the new road parcels.

None of the letters presented new information to the decision-maker. No changes were made to the environmental analysis. Each respondent received a detailed response. The comments and responses are available in the analysis file.

None of the following critical elements are affected:

- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness Areas
- Drinking and Ground Water Quality
- Prime or Unique Farmlands
- Threatened/Endangered/Special Status Animal or Plant Species
- Hazardous or Solid Wastes
- Cultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Areas of Critical Concern
- Environmental Justice
- Floodplains
- Wetlands or Riparian Zones
- Native American Religious Concerns

Monitoring

Monitoring will occur throughout implementation by appropriate specialists.

Timing of the Decision

This decision record constitutes the decision document for specific actions 2, 3, 4, and 5 described above in accordance with 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies. The decision document for specific actions 1 will be the timber sale notice which will be published at a later date in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.2.

Protest Period

Protests of this decision to implement specific actions 2, 3, 4, and 5 must be filed within 15 days of the publication of this decision in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
RATTLESNAKE FOREST HEALTH PROJECT**

The Baker Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Vale District has analyzed a proposal for the Rattlesnake Forest Health Project. The proposed project prescribes land treatment activities designed to improve the health of forest stands and riparian areas while protecting other resource values. The attached environmental assessment (EA) #OR-035-98-06 contains a detailed description and analysis of the no action and one action alternative. This EA was prepared under the guidance provided by the Baker Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (ROD), Bureau of Land Management, July 1989.

No disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental impacts on minority or low-income populations or Indian tribes is likely to result from the proposed action and any alternatives.

Implementation of the project is conditional upon completion of site-specific botanical surveys, which have not been finalized. Project design would be changed as needed to protect any sensitive plant species. None have been discovered to date.

Based on this analysis I have determined that Alternative B, the proposed action, will not have a significant impact on the human environment. For this reason, a new or supplemental environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

/S/ Ted Davis

Ted Davis

Acting Baker Resource Area Field Manager

June 7, 1999

Date